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RUEHYD/AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE 0872
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE 2432
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 002425

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DEPARTMENT ALSO FOR L (DAVID BUCHHOLZ)
KINSHASA PASS TO BRAZZAVILLE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/12/2016

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SUBJECT: CABINDA/ANGOLA: FLEC CONFUSED ABOUT USG INTENTIONS

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, reason 1
.4 (b/d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: During an April 11 meeting, FLEC (Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda) representative Antonio Nzita Bembe (Nzita) revealed divisions in the ranks of the Cabinda "resistance" movement caused by the apparent defection of former FLEC/Renovada head Antonio Bembe (Bento Bembe, no relation) and his apparent decision to cooperate with Angolan authorities. Nzita asked for U.S. views on Bembe, who had been in Dutch custody pursuant to a U.S.-initiated arrest warrant stemming from Bento Bembe's involvement in the 1989 abduction of an amcit oil worker. Bento Bembe fled the Netherlands in October 2005 and has resurfaced publicly in Africa, according to Nzita, who claimed FLEC had since expelled Bento Bembe for working with Angolan authorities to weaken and divide FLEC (and, by implication, foster Cabinda reconciliation with Luanda). Nzita asked for U.S. views on Bento Bembe and whether the U.S. had requested suspension of the arrest warrant. Nzita also claimed that the Angolan Government was pressing the USG to designate FLEC as a terrorist organization. Embassy would appreciate guidance from the Department (see Action Request, para 6). END SUMMARY.

12. (C) We met with FLEC representative Antonio Nzita Bembe (Nzita) on April 11 at his request. Nzita explained that there were, until August 2004, two FLEC factions -- FLEC/FAC (headed by his father, Nzita Henriques Tiago) and FLEC/Renovada (headed by Antonio Bento Bembe). When the two FLECs joined together in 2004 to create a unified FLEC, Nzita Henriques Tiago assumed control of the two organizations. Bento Bembe retained the title of Secretary General. Nzita said that he (Nzita) was the official FLEC representative in Western Europe.

13. (C) Nzita focused the discussion on Bento Bembe, former head of the FLEC/Renovada faction. Nzita said that Bento Bembe was involved in the 1989 kidnapping of an amcit oil worker, a crime that led to at least one other FLEC member's trial and imprisonment in the U.S. (NOTE: Nzita repeatedly said the kidnapping took place in 1980, but our research indicates it happened in 1989. END NOTE.) Nzita said the USG had initiated an international arrest warrant for Bento Bembe for his role in the kidnapping, and he was eventually taken into custody by the Dutch, who allowed him provisional liberty or unsupervised house arrest. Last fall, Vice FM Chicote of Angola reportedly visited Bento Bembe in the Netherlands and held a secret meeting that Bento Bembe did

not coordinate with the FLEC, according to Nzita. A week later Bento Bembe fled to Africa, Nzita claimed. Bento Bembe has since been seen publicly in Angola and other places, and Nzita said that Bento Bembe has been broadcasting anti-FLEC messages from Pointe Noire, Kinshasa, and Brazzaville, supposedly with the financial support and encouragement of the Angolan Government. In February 2006, FLEC stripped Bento of his remaining titles -- Secretary General of FLEC's unified front and president of the FLEC Cabinda Forum -- following a February 2006 video-teleconference meeting of the FLEC "parliament," the "Nkoto Lelanda," with representatives in Paris, Libreville, Kinshasa, Brazzaville and Cabinda.

¶4. (C) Nzita grudgingly admitted that Bento Bembe, in effect, appeared to have decided to break with FLEC and to come in from the bush and work for reconciliation with the GOA. Again, reluctantly, Nzita revealed that Bento Bembe had ties to Mpalabanda, a Catholic NGO for Cabinda, that he asserted works with U.S. Embassy Luanda, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International in documenting Angolan human rights abuses. Nzita said that Father George Kongo of Mpalabanda was friendly with Bento Bembe.

¶5. (C) Nzita asked whether Bento Bembe was still subject to a USG-instigated international arrest warrant, and requested, indirectly, whether the USG condoned Bento Bembe's collaboration with the Angolan Government, perhaps in order to weaken FLEC (which the GOA wants the USG to designate as a terrorist group). Nzita repeated a rumor that Bento Bembe had been received at Embassy Kinshasa recently.

¶6. (C) ACTION REQUEST: Post would appreciate any update on Bento Bembe with respect to the international arrest warrant

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and his flight from the Netherlands, along with appropriate guidance regarding FLEC and future contacts with its representatives.

¶7. (SBU) We asked Nzita Bembe why FLEC approached Embassy Paris rather than the Department or Embassy Luanda, but he did not answer directly. Nzita said he would provide FLEC contact information in Washington, which we will forward to the Department.

¶8. (C) BIO: Antonio Nzita Bembe is the son of FLEC leader Nzita Henriques Tiago, and claims to have refugee status in France, where he has lived since 1989. He studied law at Dijon and resides in Nevers, where he claims to orchestrate FLEC activities full-time. Nzita said he had last been in Cabinda 10 years ago, making his way via Kinshasa to join up with resistance fighters. Nzita reports he was a regular Embassy contact pre-9/11, but has had little contact since then.

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<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/paris/index.cfm>

Stapleton